

## Developing a Research Question

## Prime Questions

**Most important thinking requires one of these 3 Prime Questions:**

### Why?

This question requires analysis of cause-and-effect and the relationship between variables.

Why do some people treat their children badly?

Why does the sun fall each day?

Why do some people throw their garbage out their car windows?

Why do some people steal library books from the LC?

## Prime Questions

How?

This is the basis for problem-solving and synthesis

How? is the inventor's favorite question.

How? is the tool that fixes the broken furnace and changes the way we get cash from a bank.

How? inspires the software folks to keep sending us upgrades and hardware folks to create faster chips.

How? is the question that enables you to ask someone for a date for Homecoming.

## Prime Questions

### Which?

This question requires thoughtful decision-making - a reasoned choice based upon clearly stated criteria and evidence.

Which cell phone do I select?

Which college do I choose?

Which computer will I purchase? PC or Mac?

Which cell phone will I purchase?

## Activity 1: Question Brainstormer

Which one? Collect information to make an informed choice. e.g., Which 20th century president did the most to promote civil rights?		
How? Understand problems and perspectives, weigh options, propose solutions. e.g., How should we solve the problem of water pollution in our neighborhood?		
What if? Use the knowledge you have to pose a hypothesis and consider options. e.g., What if the Declaration of Independence abolished slavery?		
Should? Make a moral or practical decision based on evidence. e.g., Should we clone human beings?		
Why? Understand and explain relationships to get to the essence of a complicated issue. e.g., Why do people abuse children?		

## Activity 2

With a partner exchange your Question Brainstormer and see what question your partner prefers and why.

Example: **How** are the physical size of the school library and the number of materials and computers related?




**Which** is affected more by the physical size of the school library the number of materials or the number of computers?

## Essential Question

The question that you have created is your Essential Question

It is the organizing focus for your research

-  focus and plan search strategies
- identify relevant facts
- identify, evaluate and select relevant information
- analyze information
- create and communicate findings through an appropriate format

It will cast light on one or more questions

What do I already **K**now about it?

What do I **W**ant to find out about it?

What will I **L**earn as I do this?

What do I already  
know about my topic?

What do I want to find  
out about my topic?

What will I learn as I  
do my research?

### Activity 3

Using the KWL  
handout respond  
to each prompt in  
writing

Compare your  
responses to the  
prompts with your  
partner



## Dissecting Your Research Question

Which is affected more by the physical size of the school library the number of materials or the number of computers?

Does it include laptops?  
Does it include PCs?  
Does it include Macs?

What is physical size?  
How will I measure it?  
Does it include offices?  
Does it include work space?  
Does it include the second floor?

How many school libraries?  
Suburban school libraries?  
Rural school libraries?  
Urban school libraries?  
Franklin county school libraries?

Will physical size be a factor at all?

Does it include books?  
Does it include VHS tapes?  
Does it include DVDs?  
Does it include books on CD?  
Does it include magazines?  
Does it include prints?

**Now it's your turn...**

## Next Steps

After you have established your field of interest and identified your question.....

- Question - formulate key questions as you dissect your question
- Storage - design an efficient retrieval system so that you can sort, sift and interpret after collecting the data; keep a log of your decisions - why did I choose only suburban school libraries? what are the limitations?
- Prospect - survey what's out there in the way of information
- Monitor - keep updating your information
- Respond to inquiries from peers and teachers - demonstrate expertise by responding to questions
- Create your product - original thought, data compression, and synthesis